
Statement of Honorable Brian D. Miller

Inspector General

General Services Administration



Committee on Homeland Security & Government Affairs

United States Senate

January 14, 2014

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Coburn, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I appreciate the Committee's long-standing interest in oversight as well as its continued support of my office's oversight efforts.

Our reviews of GSA conferences found: contracts signed by individuals without a contracting warrant; contracting officers being brought in after-the-fact to ratify decisions already taken by event planners rather than in the initial acquisition planning stages; the use of outside event planners without a contract with the Agency; improperly providing source information to contractors; and other examples of non-compliance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation and the General Services Administration Acquisition Regulation.

After our report on the Western Regions Conference, Congressional oversight and transparency increased, which led to more accountability and internal controls. For example, GSA has reorganized and consolidated its Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Office of Administrative Services, which implemented tight controls over conference and travel spending. Additionally, GSA introduced an online training session on conference attendance that is mandatory for every employee.

The Congress enacted the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-6) requiring agencies to report conferences costing over \$20,000 to their Offices of Inspectors General within 15 days. Additionally, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-12-12 directed agencies to significantly reduce travel expenses, initiate senior level review and approval of all planned and future conference expenses in excess of \$100,000, prohibit expenses in excess of \$500,000 unless an agency head provides a waiver in writing, and publicly report on all conference expenses in excess of \$100,000. The memorandum also

directed the Department of Defense, GSA, and OMB to review the Joint Federal Travel Regulations and the Federal Travel Regulation to ensure that policies promote cost savings.

Theoretically, these requirements should discourage further conference abuses. I think a continued focus on transparency in conference spending will help ensure that internal controls and accountability remain. While I am encouraged by the steps GSA has taken, we have not had occasion to review a more recent conference, and accordingly, our assessment, while positive, is only theoretical.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for their continued support of my office. I welcome any questions the Committee has.
